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Online CPE: Real Estate Professionals' Reasons for Participation

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This study examined the reasons for participation in online learning among real estate professionals. The significance of this study concerns how online continuing professional education (CPE) can be focused to meet the needs of professionals by learning about the motivators to participation. Courses for online CPE geared towards real estate professionals are being introduced daily designed to meet personal needs and to meet state re-licensure requirements. State licensing boards are granting approvals to real estate schools to provide online continuing education courses at a record pace. Industry-wide there are no identifiable reasons as to why real estate professionals participate in online education

According to Grotelueschen (1980), "Continuing professional education generally denotes a group of adults who are categorized by their occupational status and their participation in continuing education activities, thus constituting a more homogeneous group than the category of adults in general" (p.2). He developed an instrument, the Participation Reasons Scale (PRS), to measure professionals' reasons for participation. This is a self-reporting tool that identifies educational reasons for participating in CPE and demonstrates that reasons are often different based on the profession and personal characteristics. It has broad acceptance measuring reasons for participation across many professions, and its ability to be adapted (with minor changes) to study online learning for the real estate profession. An email was sent to approximately 11,000 real estate professionals requesting that they complete the web-based PRS survey. Almost 1% ($n = 96$) completed the study, with another approximately 1% ($n = 99$) voluntarily responding as to why they had never taken an online CPE course.

First, exploratory factor analysis was run using a principle components analysis with Varimax rotation as well as a scree plot to assess the factor structure. Factors with eigenvalues over 1 were retained for the solution. Absolute values less than .35 were suppressed. Three factors with eigenvalues over 1 explained 66% of the variance. Hierarchical cluster analysis was also performed. Examination of results using eight total clustering methods supported the item groupings identified with factor analysis. The three common factors that were identified show REALTORS® reasons for participation: professional service, professional perspective, and collegial learning. There were no significant differences found when examining gender, age or years of experience as reasons for participation in online courses. There was a marginally significant interaction between gender and years of experience for professional service, professional perspective, and collegial learning.

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